

## **I dreamed of You (and Prayed it Was Real)**

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# I dreamed of You (and Prayed it Was Real)

by [ElliahRose](#)

## Summary

A ghost of a happy family that was dead before it took its first breath.

Wilbur's breath hitched in the back of his throat as his vision blurred. Wet warmth slipped down his face, and Wilbur brought his finger up to wipe it away, only for it to be replaced seconds later. He took in a single, shaky breath before Wilbur crumpled.

He fell to his knees in a painful heap and screamed at the top of his lungs, a primal, agonized scream of pure loss.

Wilbur choked on his sobs, his entire body wracking from the force of the cries. Wilbur couldn't even begin to describe the agony he was feeling. Nearly ten years and Wilbur thought he had finished the grieving process, but now it felt like he was back at the funeral, watching his brother's body being lowered into the ground for the final time.

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Or: The alternate ending to If We Could Go Back (I'd Change the World For You)

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## Notes

Here we are! The long-awaited alternate ending to "If We Could Go Back (I'd Change the World For You) Just a quick trigger warning; This book will have several mentions to past child abuse/neglect as well as suicide. Please read with caution! This is a rewrite of Chapter 3 as well as the alternate ending. Enjoy! :)

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

- Inspired by [Restricted Work] by [ElliahRose](#)

Per Phil's insistence, Tommy stayed home from school that day. When asked why, Phil responded in an overly cheerful voice that did nothing to hide his true feelings of panic and grief, "It's your birthday, silly!"

Tommy, who looked utterly gobsmacked at the idea, replies, in a very timid voice that simultaneously plucks Wilbur's heartstrings and rips his heart to shreds, "You remembered?"

Wilbur forced himself to choke back a sob at the disbelief on his little brother's face at the thought of his family remembering his birthday. The worst part was that the disbelief was not misplaced! Wilbur knew for a fact that they never celebrated Tommy's seventh birthday, something Wilbur went on to regret for the rest of his life. Wilbur's hands shook as he knelt down to look at Tommy.

"Tommy," he whispered, watching with a strange emotion bubbling in his gut when his baby brother—who'd been dead only hours earlier—turned to face him. "I know that we... we haven't been a very good family, have we?" Tommy's eyes narrowed slightly, and he nervously nibbled on his lower lip. "But that's going to change! I promise you, we're going to do better this time."

Tommy said nothing for a very long time, simply eyeing them suspiciously. "Why?" he said after minutes turned into eternities. "Why would you... you said... but I'm a murd—"

"No!" Wilbur cried, interrupting Tommy before he could finish that cursed sentence. Self-hatred poured over Wilbur like a crashing wave, and Wilbur took a couple of seconds to compose himself before he addressed Tommy's disbelief. "You... You are *not* a murderer," behind him, Phil let out a choked gasp, and Wilbur absently wondered if Phil even knew about the kind of shit Wilbur had been telling Tommy when they were kids. "You are my baby brother and I... I was wrong."

Tommy eyed him suspiciously, and every moment that Tommy did not believe him, sent stabs of self-loathing down his spine. "You're acting weird," he muttered.

"Tommy," Techno said, finally shaking himself from his shocked stupor. "I know it may seem like... like a shock," *Understatement of the year*. "But we really do mean it. And... And we're going to prove it to you!"

Tommy stuck out his lower lip in a confused pout. "How?"

Techno fumbled for a second, his eyes still locked on Tommy's face. Phil, sensing Techno's problem, jumped in. "It's your birthday, today! What do you want to do today?"

"I get to choose?" Tommy asked, incredulous. Wilbur recalled on his and Techno's birthday, they would each choose an activity they wanted to do and Phil would allow them, and Tommy would be dragged along to do this and that while they always ignored Tommy's birthday. It was all just so unfair, how horribly Tommy was treated.

*But this is a second chance*, Wilbur reminded himself. This was a second chance and there was no way in hell Wilbur was going to screw it up!

“Yep!” Phil said, popping the ‘p’ as he spoke. “This is your day, Toms! Whatever you wanna do!”

Tommy frowned and looked at the ground, nibbling his lower lip as he thought. His sock-clad toes wiggled nervously against the linoleum tile, and his hands held Henry tightly to his chest. The picture was so soft and adorable and would have been absolutely heartwarming if not for the context behind it. Instead of a sweet child thinking about what he wanted to do for his birthday, it spoke of a lonely child anxious not to disappoint his family and ruin what he thought might be his only chance.

“Can we... Can we watch a movie? Together?” Tommy asked softly, risking a glance towards Phil.

“Of course, Toms!” Phil said, and though he sounded happy, Wilbur could hear the strain behind his voice.

Wilbur glanced to the left to look at his twin brother. Techno was still leaning heavily against the door frame, his eyes wide with disbelief as they traced Tommy’s features with a desperate glint to it. He was breathing heavily, and Wilbur could just barely see him counting his fingers over and over again, trying to convince himself that this was real.

“Come on bubba,” Wilbur said, stepping forward to lightly push Tommy’s shoulder, gently guiding him to the living room. “Let’s go watch a movie!”

Tommy’s face lit up like someone just told him he won the lottery, instead of watching a movie with his family. Wilbur could vaguely remember watching movies with Phil and Techno, and glaring at Tommy whenever he tried to join them. No wonder Tommy wanted to watch a movie together so badly, he’d always been denied before.

Swallowing the bitter taste in his mouth, Wilbur sat down on the couch and lightly tugged Tommy to sit next to him. Wilbur wasn’t sure if he’d ever cuddled with his baby brother before, but it was something he always regretted. With Tommy sitting next to him on the couch, looking incredibly unsure, Wilbur slowly put his arm around Tommy’s shoulder and pulled him into a half hug.

Phil and Techno followed in suit, Techno sitting on the other side of Tommy with Phil sitting on the ground next to him. It seemed so domestic, and it was everything Wilbur had dreamed of and it was everything Wilbur had grieved the loss of.

“What movie do you wanna watch, Tommy?” Phil asked, tilting his head back to get a better look at Tommy, his eyes desperately tracing every feature on Tommy’s face. Looks like Wilbur and Techno weren’t the only ones in utter disbelief.

“Um... Up?” Tommy asked.

Phil smiled warmly. “Sounds good, mate!”

Tommy slumped gratefully, as though he was worried about what they'd say about his movie choice. Wilbur slowly moved them so Tommy would be more comfortable leaning against him, but Tommy jolted like he was about to be hurt.

"M sorry," he mumbled, awkwardly pulling away. Wilbur's heart shattered.

"No, no, sweetheart, it's okay," he soothed. "Come back, I was just trying to make it more comfortable, is all. You can lie next to me, it's okay."

Tommy hesitantly laid back down, and Wilbur let out a sigh of relief. He wasn't going to hold Tommy against his wishes, but Wilbur desperately wanted to hold Tommy, if only for a little bit. Wilbur still wasn't entirely sure this wasn't a dream, and Wilbur wanted to enjoy every moment of this if it was.

"Have you watched this before, Tommy?" Techno asked as the movie loaded onto the TV.

"Mhm," Tommy nodded nervously. "Um, Mr. Schlatt let me and Tubs watch it at his house."

Ah, Schlatt. Wilbur had nearly forgotten about the man. He was Tubbo's father, and since Tubbo was Tommy's best friend, Tommy was well-acquainted with the man. Wilbur—and by extension, Phil and Techno—had only met the man in passing. However, after Tommy's suicide, the man had come to the house drunk and absolutely furious.

He had ranted to them about how horrible they were to Tommy, screaming with his red face and slurred words about how Tommy deserved a better family, and that Phil was a disgrace of a father. At the time, Wilbur was numb. This happened only two weeks after Tommy's funeral, and Wilbur still hadn't fully processed it.

Phil got into a screaming match with him, and it ended with the police being called and both men having to spend the night in a cell. After that, Wilbur never saw Schlatt again, but only a couple of weeks later, CPS came to the house and determined Phil unfit and sent Wilbur and Techno off to separate foster homes. Wilbur to this day never knew if it was Schlatt that made the call.

Phil grimaced at the mention of Schlatt, his hands twisting into a fist. Techno, to his credit, didn't even hesitate. "That sounds nice," he said in his usual monotone voice. "Do you like Mr. Schlatt?"

Tommy's eyes lit up. "Yes!" he said, excitedly bobbing his head up and down. It was the most animated Wilbur had seen him. "He's so nice! He always talks about how much he loves Tubs and he always hangs Tubbo's tests on the fridge, even when he gets a worser grade than me! Mr. Schlatt's a really good daddy!"

Phil winced at the unintentional barb and Wilbur wondered if Tommy's tests had ever been hung on the fridge. Instinctively, Wilbur knew the answer was no. "He seems nice," Wilbur said, his voice coming out a little harder than it should have because Tommy flinched back.

"You're angry?" he asked in a hushed whisper, trying to scooch away from him.

Wilbur wanted to cry. “No, baby, I’m not, I promise,” Wilbur said softly. “You can stay.”

Tommy eyes him suspiciously for a minute before he settles back into place. Wilbur was grateful that Tommy accepted his apology so easily, but another part of him hurt because Tommy was so sensitive to his moods, and that was because Tommy was *scared* of him. Wilbur knew that Tommy was afraid of him back then, but to witness it all over again hurt way more than it should have.

The silence was stifling before the movie began to play.

As the soft tones of the Pixar movie began to play, Wilbur let his gaze rest on Tommy’s golden curls. Tommy had settled into his position comfortably, and after twenty minutes passed, Wilbur felt his shirt grow damp. Gently shifting, Wilbur was able to see Tommy’s snoring face pressed against Wilbur’s chest, a small string of drool pooling on Wilbur’s shirt.

Wilbur internally cooed at Tommy’s adorableness.

“He’s asleep?” Techno whispered, his eyebrow raising with surprise. Wilbur nodded. “Good, that means we can freak out now.”

Wilbur scowled. “What’s your problem, Techno?”

“My problem My problem is that we’re fourteen and Tommy’s alive!” Techno cried in a hushed half-whisper. “He... he was *dead* yesterday and now we’re all sitting on the couch like everything’s normal!”

“You should be fucking happy! Both of you should!” Wilbur exclaimed, mindful of his volume so as not to wake up his sleeping brother. “I mean, seriously! We have a second chance!”

“It’s a miracle,” Phil agreed. “But we need to be careful. I mean, how did this even happen? It’s not possible!”

“Clearly this is a time-travel scenario and there are rules to this kind of thing!” Techno protested. “We’re not supposed to change things! What if we write ourselves out of existence?!”

“Are you fucking kidding me right now? Not change anything?!” Wilbur hissed. “Tommy kills himself in seven days and you want us to sit back and *do nothing*?!”

Techno winced. “That’s not what I’m saying—”

“That’s *exactly* what you’re saying!”

“Don’t twist my words, Wilbur—”

“Boys!” Phil’s hissed words interrupted the screaming match that Wilbur felt bubbling up in his throat. “Is this really the place for this?” he asked, shooting a meaningful look towards Tommy’s sleeping figure. “Why don’t we put him down to sleep and continue this in the kitchen, hm?”

Wilbur wanted to argue, wanted to hold Tommy tight to his chest where he could be protected forever and never let go, but Wilbur knew that this was a conversation that needed to be had. Wilbur reluctantly lifted Tommy up enough to slide out from underneath him, and gently rested his head on the couch cushion. Tommy mumbled sleepily but did not wake.

Wilbur allowed himself one last lingering look at his brother's peaceful face, brushing his sandy hair out of Tommy's face and pressing a soft kiss to his forehead before he walked into the kitchen. Out of the corner of his eye, Wilbur could see Phil and Techno both giving Tommy soft affection before they followed him.

Wilbur crossed his arms and leaned against the marble island. "So," he said with a glare. "Speak your mind Techno. Explain to me how you want to sit back and do nothing with this second chance we've been given."

"Don't say it like that, Wilbur, you know that's not what I meant," Techno hissed. "You think I want to just let Tommy die? Huh? You think I haven't spent every day of my entire life wishing for this? For a second chance to prove to him how much I love him?"

"Then why are you saying this?" Wilbur demanded. "We have a chance to fix everything! Tommy's still alive, and we're never going to let him kill himself! We have a real shot at being a family again! I mean, fuck, Techno," Wilbur chuckled bitterly, dragging his hands down his face. "We haven't been a family since Tommy's death! This is our chance!"

"We need to be careful, that's all I'm saying," Techno said with a sigh. "Of course, we have to prevent Tommy's death, I wasn't saying we shouldn't. I'm just saying we need to be careful! We don't know how we got sent here and we can't risk making a mistake."

Phil sighed, burying his face in his hands for a second before he nodded. "Techno's right, Wilbur."

Wilbur scoffed. "Of course he is."

"Don't," Phil warned with narrowed eyes. "Don't start a fight. Not now. We can't afford to be at each other's throats while Tommy's life is on the line."

"So what do you suggest *Dad*," Wilbur sneered, ignoring the flash of hurt on Phil's face.

"We need to work together to help Tommy," Phil said. "We can't be fighting like this in front of him."

"He already thinks something is up," Techno pointed out. "We need to act as we did before Tommy's death, otherwise he'll get too suspicious."

"He's seven! He's not going to immediately jump to fucking time-travel if we don't act as close as before," Wilbur rolled his eyes.

"We've gone back in time ten years somehow," Techno said with a drawl. "But for Tommy, nothing changed. If we start screaming at each other when we used to be closer than close for no reason, he's gonna get confused. Let's throw one surprise at him at a time."

“Right because loving him is such a surprise,” Wilbur bit out.

“It is,” Techno said with a blank face. Wilbur’s breath hitched in the back of his throat. “It is a surprise, Wilbur. You can lie to yourself all you want but don’t stand there and lie to the rest of us. All of us failed to be Tommy’s family when he was alive. We didn’t show him we loved him at all, and now we’re trying to change that.”

Wilbur groaned. “This is going to suck, isn’t it?” he asked, ignoring Techno’s statement.

“Yeah,” Phil nodded. “This is probably going to be the hardest thing we’ll ever do.”

Wilbur shook his head. “No. Burying Tommy was the hardest thing we’ve ever done,” he said before he lifted his gaze to meet his brother and father. “Now, we have to make sure we never have to do it again.”

Phil nodded, his face tense. It was uncomfortably silent in the kitchen after Wilbur’s tense statement. Out of the corner of his eye, Wilbur could see Techno shifting uncomfortably. No doubt his twin wanted to escape the awkward tension.

Luckily for Techno, the tense silence was broken by muffled sniffles coming from the living room. It was a nearly silent hiccuping, and the sound of it broke Wilbur’s heart. It was the sound of a heartbroken child trying his best to hide his sorrow.

Wilbur, ignoring the way his twin and father followed him, strode into the living room to see Tommy crying pitifully on the couch, half covering his face with his worn cow plush.

“Tommy? What’s wrong? Why are you crying?” Wilbur asked gently, trying his best not to startle the child. It didn’t seem to work.

Tommy jumped slightly, looking up at Wilbur with a hesitant expression. Tommy’s lower lip wobbled. “It... It wasn’t a dream?” he asked softly.

Wilbur’s face crumbled. “Oh, bubba...” Wilbur knew this was going to be hard, he did. But somehow, knowing it would be difficult still couldn’t prepare him for the sheer devastation he felt at seeing Tommy so despondent.

Tommy genuinely believed that all of this was a dream.

And the worst part is, he has every right to believe that.

“M sorry,” Tommy sniffed, harshly scrubbing the tears off his face. “I dunno why ‘m crying.”

Wilbur stepped forward, his hand reaching towards Tommy’s face. Tommy flinched back, his eyes wide. Wilbur froze, his heart turning to ice in his chest. Tommy... Tommy really thought that Wilbur would *hit* him?

“Tommy I’d never—” Wilbur cut himself off with a choked gasp, his words dying in his chest as Tommy flinched again slightly. “I would *never*,” he said firmly, the words tasting like ash on his tongue. “I’d never hit you, Toms. None of us will, I promise.”



"I... I know," Tommy said, shifting awkwardly at the tense atmosphere. "Sorry."

Wilbur looked down, forcing himself to look away from the hesitant child. *He's lying.* Tommy didn't believe him. Wilbur blinked away the tears that were building up in his eyes. "There's nothing you need to apologize for, Toms." Wilbur whispered in a choked voice.

*But I have everything to apologize for.*

"Don't be sad birthday boy," Phil cooed, and Wilbur took the time to compose himself while Tommy's attention was diverted. "Come on! What kind of cake do you want?"

"A cake?" Tommy asked with disbelief, and Wilbur couldn't stop himself from leaning forward to wipe off the tears on Tommy's face. Wilbur did his best not to react when Tommy flinched slightly at Wilbur's movement. "I get a cake, too?"

"Of course, you do, bubba!" Wilbur said with a forced light expression, playfully tweaking Tommy's nose. "It's your birthday, after all!"

"Can... Can I please have... have a chocolate cake? Please?" Tommy asked in a slight whisper.

"Of course honey," Phil said, looking over to Techno—who had been acting very strangely all morning, and was still leaning against the wall staring at Tommy with a strange expression—and nodded his head. Wilbur frowned at that. If Techno didn't pull himself together soon, he was just going to freak Tommy out even more. "Techno and I will run over to the store real quick and get your cake. Will you be alright with just Wilbur here, Toms?"

Tommy looked over at Wilbur suspiciously. The sight of his hesitation made Wilbur want to cry. *I'm trying!* he wanted to yell. *I'm trying! Isn't that enough?* But he knew it wasn't, and even if it was, there was no way he could explain that to his seven-year-old brother.

"Mhm," Tommy hummed. That was as good a confirmation as Wilbur was going to get.

Phil nodded. "Alrighty then Toms, we'll be back soon," he said. Phil walked forward and pressed a gentle kiss to Tommy's forehead. "I love you, Tommy." he said, thumbing his forehead thrice before he and Techno left the house.

Wilbur bit his lip when he saw the way Tommy shakily raised his hand to the spot Phil just kissed and then looked to Wilbur as if to confirm it really happened. Wilbur truly failed to be a big brother, didn't he? Wilbur couldn't stand the stupefied look on Tommy's face any longer and forced himself to smile.

It felt like all of his smiles were forced lately.

"Come on Toms," he said. "Why don't you show me your room? I don't think I've ever seen it before!"

"Okay..." Tommy agreed after a long moment of hesitation, sliding off the couch to lead Wilbur to his room.

Wilbur couldn't remember what Tommy's room looked like—he never had any reason to enter it back when Tommy was alive, and after Tommy's death, Wilbur avoided that room like the plague. When he came back from foster care, Phil had already packed everything up and put it in the attic.

Tommy's room was horrifyingly bare. There was no personality in the room. Wilbur's room was painted an ugly navy blue, something he could vaguely recall begging for. His bed was pushed up against one convener, the wall covered in dozens of photos and posters.

Tommy's room looked nothing like that. It looked like a guest room. The walls were white and bare, the only furniture in the room being a tiny bed, a very small nightstand and a wardrobe in the corner. This was not the room of a typical seven-year-old, hell, there weren't even any toys in the room.

Out of the corner of his eye, something caught his attention. Wilbur turned to see a couple of pieces of paper taped clumsily up on the wall. He stepped forward, his brows furrowed as he looked at it.

"What's this?" he asked, turning to look at Tommy curiously.

"Um, they're my tests," Tommy said, stepping forward warily. "I.. I did good on them, see? That one's an A and that one's an A plus!" Tommy smiled as he looked at the tests that he worked hard on. "And these are my drawings I made in art class!"

"They're very nice," Wilbur said with a soft smile, loving the way Tommy's face seemed to light up.

"I know," Tommy said with a small grin. "That's why they're on the wall, see? It means I'm proud of myself!"

Wilbur paused. He taped these tests on the wall because he's... proud of himself? Wilbur swallowed dryly. "You... You know, if you wanted, we could put these on the fridge?"

Tommy froze, his eyes widening impossibly large. "On... On the fridge?"

Wilbur nodded. "Of course, Toms," he said. "If you want to."

Tommy hesitated for a couple of seconds before he started to nod his head eagerly, a shy grin making its way across his face. He reached up to lightly peel off the test with a bright red "A+" before he froze for a second and looked back at Wilbur. "We have to put it on the side, though..." Tommy said, biting his lip nervously. "So Dad doesn't get angry."

Every time Wilbur thought maybe he was getting somewhere like he was starting to make a difference, something came in to smash his heart. Tommy was afraid to put his test on the fridge in case he made Phil angry? Where the hell did he even come up with that? Wilbur swears to every god he can think of if Phil said something to Tommy...

When Wilbur noticed his silence was too long and Tommy had started to step back, Wilbur rushed to say, "Phil, er, Dad won't get mad at you if you hang your test up on the fridge."

“Are you sure? I really don’t want to make him angry, Wilbur,” Tommy shyly toed the floor.

“I’m sure, Toms,” Wilbur said, and he sniffed awkwardly, doing his damndest best not to cry. He gently took the test off the wall. “Come on, bubba, let’s go put this on the fridge!”

Wilbur led his brother into the kitchen and moved to place it on the fridge when Tommy suddenly stopped him.

“Wait!” Tommy cries. “We should put it on the side of the fridge, so it’s not taking up so much space.”

Wilbur’s face fell slightly. “Tommy…” he whispered, biting his lip. “Why… Why don’t you want to put the test on the front of the fridge where everyone can see?”

Tommy toed the linoleum tile awkwardly. “But Dad won’t like it if I cover up your music…”

He was afraid that Phil would get angry at Tommy for covering up everyone else’s achievements with his own. *Oh christ*. Wilbur clenched his hands and looked down at the floor, angrily biting his lip as tears flooded his eyes. “This is going to be so much harder than I thought it would be,” he said.

“What?” Tommy asked nervously, his fingers clenching at his side.

“Nothing, bubs, just me being silly like usual,” Wilbur said with a wry smile. “Come on Tommy, I promise Phil won’t be mad if we put your test on the front of the fridge.”

“Phil?”

Wilbur paused. “Er, Dad, I mean,” he said quickly. “Nevermind that, Toms, let’s put this test where it belongs!” He places Tommy’s test on top of one of Wilbur’s old music scores. For some reason, the sight is almost cathartic. Finally, something good covering up Wilbur’s selfish mistakes.

“Good job on your test, Toms,” Wilbur says gently, turning around to ruffle Tommy’s hair.

The tender moment is ruined—of course—with the return of Phil and Techno. Tommy jumps like he’s been caught doing something wrong, and the sight of it fills Wilbur with bitterness. “Oh! They’re back!” Wilbur said, doing his best not to betray his petty feelings.

“We’re home!” Phil called, stumbling through the door, his arms weighed down by several plastic bags. “We got food for dinner and some special surprises for a very special boy…”

“I got presents?” Tommy gasped, a bright smile lighting up his face as his eyes bugged out with disbelief. “Really?!”

“He’s surprised because we never got him presents before,” Techno muttered under his breath, too quietly for Tommy to hear. “Because we’re a horrible family.”

While Wilbur absolutely agreed with his estranged twin, he didn’t appreciate the way Tommy tensed and looked almost afraid at Techno’s mutters. Phil, who seemed to notice as well, shot

a glare at Techno.

“Tech,” Phil said softly, shooting a glance at Tommy.

Techno looked at him, his eyes flashing with pain for a brief second before he looked back down. “Sorry for scaring you Tommy,” he said softly. “I didn’t mean to.”

“You didn’t scare me! I’m the biggest man ever!” Tommy said with a fake laugh that sounded almost too real.

“That’s right, you are!” Wilbur agreed just for the sake of moving on. “And since you’re the biggest man ever, you get to choose whether you want to open presents first or eat dinner?”

It was obvious that Tommy wasn’t sure what the “correct answer” was—even though there wasn’t one. He looked nervously towards Phil, and when Phil’s face didn’t betray anything, Tommy said in a very small and careful voice, “Dinner?”

And so Wilbur found himself sitting down at the table for the first family dinner in nearly a decade. It was tense and uncomfortable, no one really knew what to say. By the time everyone had finished eating, Wilbur was fighting the urge to tear his hair out from all the tension.

When the dinner was finally over, Phil led everyone into the living room where he had spread out all the presents on the floor. “Go on then!” Phil said enthusiastically, and Tommy let out a small giggle and ran over to the pile. The sound of his giggle made Wilbur smile softly.

He ripped open the first box, his blue eyes lighting up with excitement at the soft, fuzzy cow blanket. He blinked when a flash went off and looked up to see Techno holding a camera. “There seems to be a shortage of photos of you, Theseus,” Techno said when Tommy looked at him questioningly.

Wilbur tried not to feel jealous when Tommy smiled warmly at Techno and Techno flushed, taking another picture.

“Tommy! I want to see you open the present I got you!” Wilbur whined, drawing Tommy’s attention away from Techno. Guess he couldn’t contain the jealousy after all.

“You... you got me something?” Tommy asked. Wilbur nodded.

“I told Phil, er, I mean, I told Dad what to get while he was at the store,” Wilbur explained, ignoring the way Phil winced at Wilbur’s use of the word “dad”. Wilbur pointed to a small box near the edge of the pile. “That one’s mine!”

Tommy opened the box and let out a huge gasp, his eyes practically falling out of his skull with excitement. “*It’s a moth!*” he cried, gleefully pulling the moth plush out of the box. “Look! Look at her! She’s so pretty!”

“I’m glad you like her, Toms,” Wilbur said with a soft smile. This, this right here was all he ever wanted. Tommy’s gleeful expression was like a soothing balm on all his pain.

“I love her!” Tommy exclaimed. “I’m gonna call you Clementine!”

The rest of the evening played out much the same. Tommy continued to open presents, and when that was over, Tommy picked another Pixar movie to watch with everyone. Wilbur and Techno sat on the couch in front of the TV, and Wilbur felt his heart soar when Tommy chose to squeeze in between them.

With everyone sitting comfortably on the couch, Wilbur allowed himself to close his eyes and simply bask in the feeling of peace—a feeling he hasn’t felt in a very long time. It was strange... Some part of him was grieving. What for, Wilbur didn’t know. After all, Tommy was here and he had a second chance to fix everything he ruined.

So why was he grieving?

“Wilby?”

Wilbur cracked open one eye to look down at Tommy, who was staring up at him with wide doe eyes. “Yeah, Toms?” Tommy looked wrong, and Wilbur sat up straighter with a frown. Why did Tommy look so pale? Why was Tommy so cold? “Tommy, are you alright?”

“This was the best birthday I’ve ever had,” Tommy whispered.

Wilbur smiled. “I’m glad, Toms,” Wilbur said, gently pressing his face into his baby brother’s curls, trying to memorize Tommy’s smell.

“I wish it could’ve been real.”

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Wilbur woke with a start, his face wet and sticky with tears. His head was pounding and his mouth tasted terrible, like he’d licked the floor of a gas station. His eyelids felt heavy and it took Wilbur a few seconds to come back to reality.

“Where...?” Wilbur mumbled, turning his head, ignoring the almost unbearable throbbing that demanded his attention. What was going on?

He had just been on the couch with Tommy, hadn’t he? They were watching a movie. Wilbur was fixing everything! Why was he... back...

“No!” Wilbur shot up with a gasp, the sudden shout causing his voice to give out. Wilbur choked on a cough as his heart began to pound dangerously against his chest. He struggled to inhale, fighting against the hyperventilation that threatened to knock him out. Denial filled his head as he shook his head back and forth frantically.

He hunched over, his back twinging painfully as he pressed his forehead to his knees. “*Oh god,*” he whispered, his breaths coming out in pained wheezes. “*No, no, no, no, no.*”

He could still hear him: “*This was the best birthday I’ve ever had.*” He could hear Tommy’s voice so clearly. He could hear the boy’s tender tones, the hesitance whenever he opened his

mouth to speak. It felt so real. It was so *real*.

He could still feel him: The way he trembled against any form of affection. The way he melted into a hug moments later. The way his hair tickled Wilbur's nose—the smell of baby shampoo so strong he could practically taste it.

*It was so real.*

“God, no,” Wilbur begged, his fingers curling painfully into the bedspread. He struggled in vain to control the trembling in his fingers. “Please, *please* don't do this. Please. Please.”

It felt so real. Wilbur went back in time! He went back and he was going to save Tommy! He was given a second chance! He was! He was so close to having a happy, healthy, functioning family. For once in his life he was going to be able to go home and smile at the sight of family; whole and unbroken.

“Why?” Wilbur said in a broken whisper. “Why would you do this to me. Why would you give me a chance and then—FUCK YOU!” Rage washed over him like a tidal wave, threatening to drown him with its force. “FUCK YOU! IS THIS SOME KIND OF SICK KARMA BULLSHIT?!”

Wilbur launched himself out of his bed, stumbling over the sheets tangled in his feet. He crashed into his nightstand, meaningless objects rattling from the force. He grabbed a worthless knick-knack, some paperweight given to him after his debut, and threw it at the wall with a wordless screech of rage.

“IS THIS FUNNY TO YOU?!” Wilbur demanded, screaming at whatever silent deity decided to fuck him over. “HUH?!” He grabbed the clock and ripped it out of the socket and threw it to the other side of the room, ignoring the loud crash. “FUCK YOU! FUCK YOU, YOU SICK FUCK!”

He grabbed another object off his nightstand without looking at it, raising his hand to throw it. The sound of the picture frame hitting the floor and shattering into countless pieces broke Wilbur out of his rage. He looked down at the mess at his feet.

The only picture he had of his family stared back at him, lifeless eyes glaring accusingly at him. It was the only picture Wilbur had of everyone and it was more precious to him than gold. A nurse had taken this picture after Kristen delivered Tommy; it was the only picture with Tommy in it where everyone was smiling. Phil, standing beside an exhausted Kristen, looking lovingly at the screaming newborn. On the other side of Kristen, Wilbur was struggling to pull himself up onto the hospitable bed, his gaze focused solely on the infant in Kristen's hold. Next to Wilbur, Techno stood, his emotionless gaze boring into the camera, but there was a tiny glint of a smile.

A ghost of a happy family that was dead before it took its first breath.

Wilbur's breath hitched in the back of his throat as his vision blurred. Wet warmth slipped down his face, and Wilbur brought his finger up to wipe it away, only for it to be replaced seconds later. He took in a single, shaky breath before Wilbur crumpled.

He fell to his knees in a painful heap and screamed at the top of his lungs, a primal, agonized scream of pure loss.

Wilbur choked on his sobs, his entire body wracking from the force of the cries. Wilbur couldn't even begin to describe the agony he was feeling. Nearly ten years and Wilbur thought he had finished the grieving process, but now it felt like he was back at the funeral, watching his brother's body being lowered into the ground for the final time.

He couldn't breathe; the force of his weeping was pushing his face into the ground, stilted, half-choked breaths cut short by the tears that were spilling into his mouth. It felt like he was dying. Was he dying? He must be.

It took a few minutes of this overwhelming grief for Wilbur to even realize he was whispering in between gasps of air. "*Please, please, please, please, please, please,*" Wilbur didn't know what he was begging for, but he was terrified that if he stopped begging, he would fall apart.

Time passed in an indescribable blur. Wilbur could have been slumped there, knees to chest and forehead digging into the hard, cold floor, weeping for hours. Maybe it was only twenty minutes. Maybe a decade. It felt like an entire lifetime of grief escaped his overwhelmed body in that time.

When he finally resurfaced from the ocean of agony, Wilbur's voice was gone, and his face was sticky and wet. His eyes were swollen and puffy, which made blinking hurt. His body ached as he released the stiff position he'd been lying in.

"It wasn't real," Wilbur said, his voice cracking several times. He closed his eyes, a cold numbness washing over his body. The image of Tommy squealing with joy at the moth plush; so real and yet unreal at the same time. He let his head thump against the floor as he rolled onto his side. "It was just a dream."

He swallowed dryly.

"It wasn't real."

With shaky hands, Wilbur pulled himself up off the floor, carefully side-stepping the glass shards on the floor. He walked carefully to his bed and all but collapsed into it. The time travel was nothing but a dream, and Tommy was still dead.

"I'm so sorry, Toms," Wilbur whispered to the empty room. "I'm so sorry you'll never get to learn how to ride a bike. Or how to make spaghetti. Or how to," he swallowed dryly against his rough throat. "How to tie y-your shoes."

He took in a shaky breath, his eyes glancing down at the photo that was still sitting on the ground, surrounded by broken glass. The unfairness of it all made Wilbur want to scream. But he's already screamed, and it didn't fix anything.

"You deserved a better brother," he said in a tiny whisper. "You deserved a better family. You deserved a life. And I *wish to God* that you had that."

His room was dead quiet, and Wilbur couldn't stand it. He couldn't be here anymore.

He stood up suddenly, hurriedly pulling on a pair of shoes. He grabbed his keys and moved to open the door, and as an afterthought, went back to grab the photo. He let himself look back at his empty apartment one last time before he slammed the door closed.

He walked silently, his body shivering at the chill in the air. His watch read three twenty-two in the morning, and the streets were silent. He didn't really have a place in mind when he fled his apartment, but apparently, his subconscious made a decision.

He stopped just outside the gate, his eyes looking up at the sign, another wave of grief crashing into him. *L'Manburg National Cemetary*, the sign read. He took in a deep breath, gathering all the strength he had, and stepped inside.

The last time he had been here, he was drunk off his ass, and grieving the fact that his baby brother wasn't there to go to his first live concert. Even though Wilbur didn't come here often, he still knew exactly how to get to Tommy's grave.

As he stood there in front of the headstone, he was greeted with a surprisingly fresh bouquet of flowers. Someone had been here recently, and suddenly Wilbur felt an almost suffocating feeling of self-loathing.

Even in death, Wilbur was failing as a big brother.

"You deserve better, sunshine," Wilbur confessed. "You deserve to be remembered. You deserve to be mourned. You deserve to have your whole family."

A single tear fell down his cheek. Tommy deserved to be mourned by his whole family and his whole family *needed* to mourn. Together. This awful, festering wound deep inside of him would never heal without it. He could recall the feeling of wholeness he felt when they were all watching a movie in his dream and he wanted that.

He wanted his family here with him, on this day.

He dug around in his pocket and pulled out his phone. He opened it and scrolled through his missed calls until he found the unknown number that he knew by heart. With a shaky breath, Wilbur pressed the call button and held it up to his ear.

The line rang a few times before it was answered, and the hesitance in the familiar voice made Wilbur's eyes fill with tears.

"Hello?" Phil asked in a groggy voice. "Will? Is that you?"

"He-Hey Dad," Wilbur whispered, and Phil's breath hitched over the phone.

"Wilbur? Are you alright, son?" Phil asked. Wilbur let out a wet laugh, a mixture of a sob and a gasp.

"No," he said honestly. "No, I'm not."



“Where are you?” Phil asked, his voice grim. “What’s going on?”

“I’m at his grave,” Wilbur whispered into the phone in a broken voice. Phil’s silence was deafening. “And…” he hesitated as his voice broke. *For Tommy*, he thought. “And I really need you here right now.”

Phil let out a harsh breath of air. “Okay,” he said, and Wilbur could hear shuffling from his end. “Okay, Wil, I’m coming. Alright? I’m coming, Wil.”

Wilbur hung up before he could hear anything else. Wilbur wasn’t sure how long he sat there staring at the headstone depicting his baby brother’s name. He felt cold, numb like he wasn’t really there. It wasn’t until he felt a heavy hand rest on his shoulder, that Wilbur came out of his stupor.

He looked up and blinked twice, staring blankly at Phil, who was towering over him with an agonized expression. Standing next to him, surprisingly, was Techno. Did Phil call him? He knew he must look horrific, but at that moment, Wilbur didn’t care about his pride.

Wilbur took in a deep breath. “I dreamed,” he said in a hoarse whisper. It was so soft, yet the world was so quiet, it felt like his words echoed across the entire yard. “That we celebrated his birthday.” Phil sucked in a sharp breath.

Wilbur looked down at the grave, tears blurring his vision and spilling over. “I dreamed,” he continued. “That we went back in time. That we had a second chance.” Wilbur sobbed, a wet, broken thing. “I dreamed that we saved him.”

Wilbur looked back at his brother and father, a shell of the man he once was, of who he could’ve been.

“I dreamed that we were a family.”

Phil’s face crumpled. “Oh, Wil,” he whispered, falling to his knees to pull Wilbur into a tight embrace. “My baby, my precious sons.” Phil wept into Wilbur’s hair and Wilbur wept into Phil’s shirt. He could feel a heavy hand resting on his shoulder, and he knew Techno was kneeling next to him, offering him the steady comfort that Wilbur never realized he needed.

*“He’s gone and everything is wrong,”* Wilbur wept. Phil comforted him through his tears.

“We’re going to get through this,” he said gently—and it was so reminiscent of Tommy’s funeral all those years ago. Wilbur had held Phil’s hand tightly and wept as he was covered in dirt, and all Phil could say was, *“We’re going to get through this.”* over and over again.

“I’m sorry, dad,” Wilbur cried. “I’m sorry that we aren’t a family anymore. I’m sorry I was a horrible brother. I’m sorry Tommy’s gone. I’m sorry! *I’m sorry.*”

Phil pressed a gentle kiss to Wilbur’s forehead. “I love you,” he whispered. “I love you.”

He repeated it over and over again with the same desperation as Wilbur’s apologies. And for the first time in nearly ten years, a broken family sat together and grieved for a life that they could have had.

“I love you.”

*I'm sorry.*

The family held each other and grieved for their missing piece. Above them, was a starless sky, lit only by the moon. Their family was shattered, but the pieces were slowly being mended. For the first time in nearly a decade, a broken family reunited.

*“Use your second chance wisely.”*

## End Notes

Yeah.... this was technically the original ending for the book, but I decided it was too sad, and changed it. I hope all of you enjoyed this new perspective on what happened. Feel free to interpret the ending how you want, but in my mind, the second chance (at least in this ending) wasn't about saving Tommy, but bringing the family back together *for* Tommy. Do they deserve this? That's up to you.

Thank you so much to everyone who read this, and if you feel inspired to create artwork for this series, please let me know, I'd love to see it! As always, please leave a kudos and a comment; they feed my soul.

## Works inspired by this one

[I dreamed of You \(and Prayed it Was Real\) Poetry](#) by [Dusana\\_so](#)

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!